MODERN

The Airspeed Oxford with Two Cheetah X

Layout : Quantity

AS the Expansion Scheme began to swing into its stride the Air Ministry decided to order a large number of twin-engined monoplane trainers which would reproduce to a large degree the characteristics of contemporary high-performance first-line machines. The type chosen was the Airspeed Oxford, which, apart from functioning as a transitory medium for flying instruction (including instrument flying), was designed to provide for instruction in navigation, night flying, wireless, direction finding, gunnery, and vertical photography. Incidentally, it would make a first-rate general-purpose machine, or could be used for over-water reconnaissance.

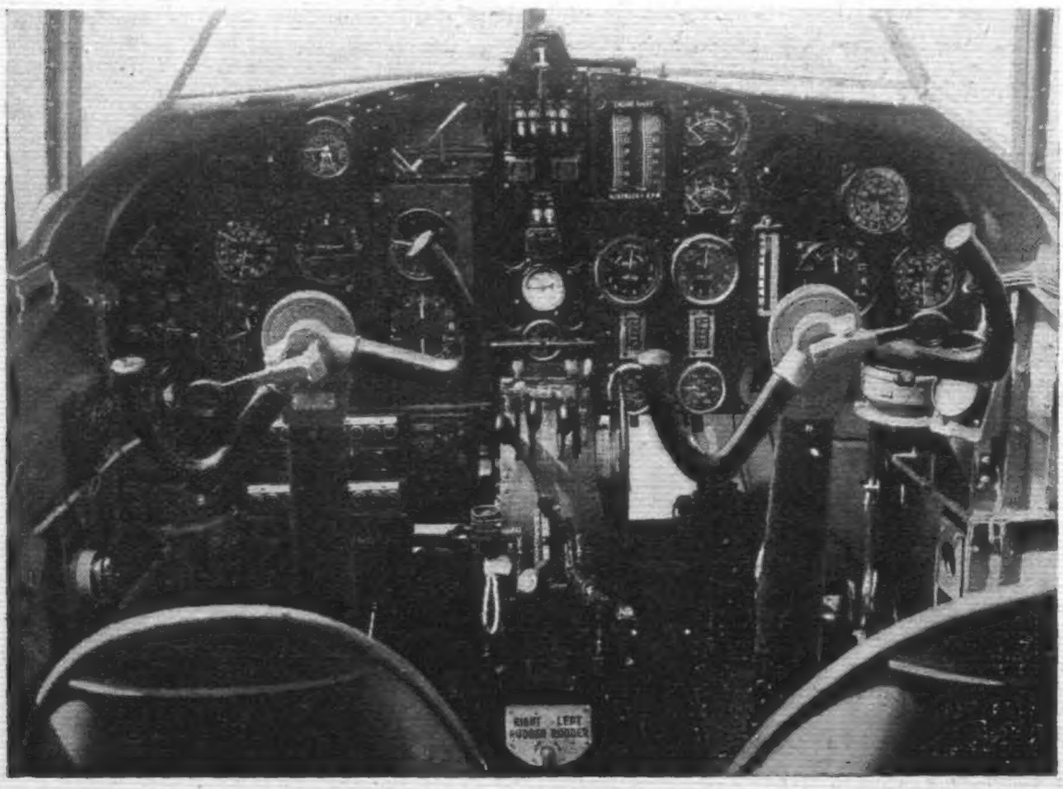
The manufacturers were fortunate in having behind them constructional and operational experience with the Envoy, upon which the design of the Oxford was based. Planning the Convertible Envoy in its military form also helped pave the way for the new machine.

Before very long Oxfords will be in production not only at the Airspeed Portsmouth works, which have already delivered a useful number, but at the De Havilland and Percival plants.

For a good many years it has been the habit of civil pilots and of transport pilots in particular to jeer at the flying equipment in, and general layout of, military aeroplanes. In the days when such jeering was really justified the powers that be probably felt that such things as v.p. airscrews, retractable undercarriages, flaps, and, for that matter, proper blind-flying instruments, were neither necessary nor desirable in military machines. During the past year or two things have been changing, but, even so, there has been a good deal to criticise, at least in the flying equipment of a great many modern types.

It would probably not be an exaggeration to say that in the Airspeed Oxford a really modern array of controls and instruments has been planned in complete detail and, as a whole, almost for the first time. This is only right and proper, since the Oxford is intended primarily as a twin-engined trainer in which pilots who are eventually going on to the modern type of aeroplane will learn how to make the best use of all the equipment which they are likely to find in such a type. The planning of the control cabin itself is such as would please even the pilots who are familiar with some of the much-praised American transport aeroplanes. In fact, if production considerations permitted, the Oxford, in suitably modified form, would make an excellent training machine for the use of probationary pilots in the larger transport operating companies. The only items which are missing in the present-production Oxfords are those relating to the blind-approach technique. No doubt later machines of the same type will be suitably equipped for such approach practice when more Service aerodromes have been supplied with the necessary ultra-short-wave beacons and marker beacons—presuming these to be standard.

Recently we had a chance of flying with Mr. G. B. S. Errington, the Airspeed test pilot, on an acceptance test flight. During the course of this flight the machine was put through all its normal paces, and it was in-



The controls and instrument panel of the Oxford. Below the standard R.A.F.-type blind-flying panel will be seen the bomb release switches. The throttle column carries, also, undercarriage, airscrew pitch and flap controls, together with rudder-bias adjustment. Brake controls will be seen on each control column. A photograph of the instrument board of the prototype Oxford, with the nature of each fitting indicated, appeared on page 603 of *Flight* for June 16.

"*Flight*" photograph.